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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine if there were significant differences between self-concept scores of children who had female teachers and those who had male teachers in the fifth grade. Fifteen male and 15 female elementary school teachers' classrooms were randomly selected for observation. Subjects were those children who had never had a male teacher before fifth grade. Tests used were the Perkins Self-Concept Q-Sort Test and the SRA Junior Inventory. Analysis of the data collected indicated that (1) male teachers had no differential effect on children's self-concept when compared to female teachers, (2) interaction between the sex of the teacher and the sex of the students on students' self-concept scores was not significant, (3) female students' self-concept scores were significantly higher than those of male students, (4) interaction between individual teachers and children's self-concept scores was not significant, and (5) mean self-concept scores didn't vary from classroom to classroom. The claim of a need for more male teachers in the elementary classroom to enhance the male student's self-concept was not supported by the findings. The sex difference found between students' self-concepts has strong implications for innovators in elementary school curriculums and research. (MH)

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THE EFFECT OF THE MALE ELEMENTARY TEACHER ON CHILDREN'S SELF-CONCEPTS

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Need for the Study

Approximately half of all classroom teachers instruct at the elementary level, and the other half teach in the secondary schools. However, more than 80 per cent of the men teach in the secondary schools, while nearly 70 per cent of the women teach in the elementary schools. Thus, on a national level, only 11.9 per cent of the teachers in the elementary schools are men.

This small number of men teachers in the elementary schools has provided psychologists, educators, parents, and laymen with an excellent conversational topic as to the need for more men in elementary education; however, very little empirical research has been conducted to prove the need of the male teacher in elementary school education.

The expression of the need for more men in elementary education is not new. In 1908 G. Stanley Hall issued a warning to educators that their policy of feminizing the schools was influencing and abetting maladjustments in the young male learner. Several years later, Hall once again stated that, "As the home needs both a father and mother, so both men and women are needed for the upbringing of the child in school." Hall's statements are representative of the remarks advanced since the turn of the century relating to th need of men in elementary education. However, researchers have not been sufficiently motivated to investigate the many verbal hypotheses.

This writer considered that the absence of men in elementary education was not conclusive evidence to justify the frequently expressed opinion that more men are needed in elementary education. The Handbook of Research on Teaching

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reported seventy-three references on measurement of teacher classroom behavior. But not one of these studies indicated to whom, boy or girl, the teacher behavior was directed. Since sex cannot be considered a neutral factor, it was imperative to investigate the influence the male elementary teacher model had in the development of the self-concept of boys and girls in the elementary school.

Summary of Literature

Results of studies revealed that the present elementary school, heavily populated by female teachers, does not afford the male student with the opportunity to identify with the appropriate sex model. The process of identification was viewed as a significant aspect of self-concept development. As male students begin formal education they view the school environment as having a female connotation.

Studies pertaining to teacher perception of elementary school students indicated that male students receive more blame, more disapproval, and generally over-all negative treatment when compared to female students. These findings were explained partly on the basis of the fact that female teachers do not accept the aggressiveness of the male student and partly on the fact that the elementary school environment is planned by and for the needs and characteristics of females.

Studies pertaining to the effect of the child's self-concept on learning revealed that the child's self-concept influenced his level of aspiration with respect to learning tasks. The male students' performance in several academic areas supported these research articles. One could conclude that more young girls than boys view school activities as congruent with their sex-role, and, consequently, they should be more highly motivated to master academic tasks.

The dearth of male elementary teachers seems to be well established. The effects of this lack of men in early schooling were hypothesized as being responsible for a lack of achievement by the male learner, for feminity in the

school and its curriculum, and for contributing to lowered self-concept in the male student. Opinionated articles appealing for men to teach in the elementary schools have appeared in a variety of sources.

Finally, it has been suggested that more men should be urged to teach in the elementary school. The advantages to be gained by such practices, however, have not been demonstrated. In fact, comprehensive studies assessing the relationship of the male students' self-concepts with the male elementary teacher appeared to be totally lacking in the review of literature.

Research Hypotheses

Research hypotheses of the study are presented below:

1. The self-concept scores of the children in the male elementary teachers' classrooms are higher than the self-concept scores of the children in the female elementary teachers' classrooms.

2. There is no interaction between the sex of the teacher and the sex of the student on children's self-concept scores.

In addition, three statistical hypotheses were analyzed and treated as related research in the study. The following represent these hypotheses:

1. There is no significant difference between the sex of students on self-concept scores.

2. There is no significant interaction between the individual teachers and sex of students on children's self-concept scores.

3. There is no significant difference between the individual classroom effects on children's self-concepts.

Instrumentation - Self-Concept Q-Sort Test

Perkins developed a self-concept Q-sort instrument for middle grade elementary school children. The Q-sort consisted of 50 self-referent statements derived from compositions of fourth and sixth grade children as reported in a research by Jersild.

An ideal sorting of the 50 items in the Q-sort was created by a group of judges, consisting of eight elementary school teachers and seven psychologists. A correlation of .94 was found between the ideal ratings of the teachers given

to the self-sort items and the ideal ratings of the psychologists. A composite "ideal-sort" was established by assigning to each item the value which was most frequently assigned to the items by the judges. Greater than 50 per cent agreement among the judges was achieved on each of the items. Perkins reported that on a test-retest over a period of seven days, a reliability coefficient of .65 was achieved.

Boles analyzed the degree of consistency between Perkins' Q-sort data and the SRA Junior Inventory data collected on children of varying socio-economic, intelligence, and achievement background. It was accomplished by computing the Spearman Rank Correlation coefficient between the Q-sort dissonance scores and class mean per cents in each area of the Inventory. The grand correlation between the two tests was .45.

Statistical Treatment of Data

The design of the statistical data was established to determine if any significant difference existed between the self-concept scores of male and female students with relationship to the sex of their teachers. The statistical design employed the three-factor experiment, a hierarchal design, described by Winer. The design in this study had one dependent variable, the self-concept score, and two independent variables, sex of student and sex of teacher. The treatment consisted of one-half the 12 year-old student population spending one school year with male teachers and the other one-half with female teachers. There were three factors in the design: sex of teacher with two levels, sex of student with two levels, and classrooms with 15 levels. The classroom factor was nested within the sex of the teacher factor. The classroom served as the experimental unit.

Results

The analysis of the data pertaining to the research hypothesis revealed that (1) male teachers had no differential effect on children's self-concept scores when compared to female teachers (probability less

than .582), and (2) there was no significant interaction between the sex of the teacher and the sex of the students on children's self-concept scores (probability less than .924).

Related findings indicated that (1) the female students had a significantly better self-concept than male students (probability less than .001), (2) there was no significant interaction effect between individual teachers and self-concept scores of children (probability less than .308), and (3) the mean self-concept scores of each classroom did not vary significantly from each other (probability less than .202).

Discussion

The claim of a need for more male teachers in the elementary classroom who would enhance the ~~male~~ male student's self-concept was not supported by the research findings in this study. It was assumed that the male elementary teacher would serve as an appropriate sex modeling figure for the male student. One explanation of the lack of significant difference found in this study concerns the assumed masculinity of the male elementary teacher. If the male elementary teacher possesses effeminate traits, then he may be an inappropriate sex modeling figure for the male student. However, Terman presented evidence that the female elementary teacher tends to score in the less feminine direction on a masculine-feminine scale. This teacher could be viewed as an inappropriate sex model for female students. It is this writer's contention that the male teachers participating in this study served as appropriate masculine model figures to the same degree that the female teachers possessed appropriate feminine modeling characteristics.

Another explanation that might provide insight into the male teacher's not having any differential effect on the male student's self-concept when compared to the effect of the female teacher centers on the amount of time the male student spent with female teachers in the elementary school. Since

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the male student population spent the previous school years with female teachers, perhaps the one year spent with the male teacher in the fifth grade was insufficient time for their self-concepts to be enhanced through the modeling process.

The finding that the sex of the teacher apparently had no differential effect on children's self-concepts in addition to the finding that there was no significant interaction effect between individual teachers on children's self-concept scores suggests that school administrators should investigate their assumptions in the practice of hiring male elementary teachers if these assumptions are contradictory to these findings. The findings in this study did not support the often expressed statement that the male elementary student needs a male teacher with whom he can identify and improve self-concept.

The findings in this study reported that the male elementary students had significantly lower self-concepts than did the female students. This difference was seemingly unrelated to the sex of the teacher.. This finding supported the research conducted by Perkins. He found that the male students in sixth grade generally had significantly lower self-ideal self-congruencies than did the female students.

It seems plausible to cite possible reasons for this difference. As children mature, their self-concepts become more stable and their perception of self-concepts become more stable and their perception of self becomes more consistent. A widely accepted generalization from the field of human growth and development is that girls mature faster physically than do boys. Since the male elementary students generally are lower in scholastic achievement and smaller in physical size than their female counterparts, their lower self-concepts might be a reflection of these inadequacies.

It is apparent that this difference between the sex of students' self-concepts has strong implications for innovators in the field of

elementary school curriculum. If the male student's self-concept is generally accepted as being lower than the self-concept of the female student, perhaps some of the disparity between the achievements of the two sexes in the elementary school might be accounted for by a lower level of aspiration on behalf of the male student. Educators should be aware of these differences and attempt to construct a curriculum more meaningful for the young male student. Teacher educationprograms should employ the best techniques and skills in fodtering within the teacher candidate a desire to reduce this apparent differentiation in scholastic achievement which exists between the male student and the female student in the elementary school.